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[Preventive Health Equals War Fighter Readiness](#)

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By Capt. Eric R. Hoffman, MSC, executive officer, Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center



Maintaining a healthy population is at the very core of Force Health Protection.



When I entered my PhD program in medical entomology, I had absolutely no idea where the journey would eventually take me. Fast-forward 20 years later as executive officer for the Navy's definitive public health resource; I can say without hesitation that public health is more than just finding new ways to control ticks and mosquitoes.

When asked to do a blog on "Preventive Health," I had to take a step back. For those of us in the public health arena the term "Preventive Health" is really a hybrid of multiple public health disciplines. At a minimum, it includes "Population Health," "Preventive Medicine," and "Environmental Health." That represents a pretty good chunk of everything that the [Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center \(NMCPHC\)](#), and its field activities does to help prevent disease and promote health for service members and their families world-wide.

Maintaining a healthy population is at the very core of Force Health Protection. At NMCPHC, we provide health promotion and wellness programs and services to prevent illness and injury, enhance readiness, and promote healthy lifestyles and behaviors. I have personally benefited from our health promotion and wellness program to include nutrition and fitness information. And when something goes awry – like a disease outbreak that represents a potential threat to the war-fighter, we have the expertise to analyze the data and hopefully reduce the impact on readiness.

Another key component of preventive health is monitoring the environment where Sailors and Marines work and live. We help ensure troops are breathing clean air, drinking clean water, and avoiding exposure to toxins and pollutants, and any other workplace and environmental exposure hazards.



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Categorically, the field of Preventive Medicine is where I fit in the most. As a medical entomologist, I'm mostly interested in controlling the vectors (fancy name for bugs and other vermin) that spread disease. Ultimately the goal of us all in the preventive medicine field to provide Force Health Protection by rapidly assessing, preventing, and controlling health threats in a theater of operations and enhancing organic Preventive Medicine assets. We also provide technical and professional support to Navy medical personnel who are responsible for making Navy Preventive Medicine policies and to Navy medical department personnel who identify, evaluate, monitor, and respond to diseases, injuries, and environmental factors that threaten human health.

The value of Preventive Health to mission success was made very clear to me during deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom as part of the Navy's expeditionary Forward Deployable Preventive Medicine Unit (FDPMU). This small team of public health specialists including Entomologists, Environmental Health Officers, Microbiologists, Industrial Hygienists, Biochemists, Preventive Medicine and Laboratory Technicians effectively applied our expertise and experience to reduce the risk of illness and injury in a harsh environment to historically low levels, contributing to a healthy and ready force.

Emphasis on Preventive Health is critical for ensuring war fighter readiness. In math terms, Preventive Health equals Readiness. And readiness continues to be one of our SG's three goals.

As mentioned earlier, at NMCPHC and our field activities "It's what we do." I'll conclude by harkening back to an old expression first heard many years ago: An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

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